

Laurie Lawlor

author ✕ educator ✕ often found in nature

Rachel Carson

and Her Book That Changed the World: an activity and discussion guide

Determined and curious even as a child, Rachel Carson's fascination with the natural world led her to study biology and pursue a career in science at a time when very few women worked in the field. As a journalist and pioneering researcher, she investigated and exposed the harmful effects of pesticide overuse. Best known for writing *Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson was a major figure in the early environmental movement, and her work brought a greater understanding of the impact humans have on our planet.



Before and while reading the book

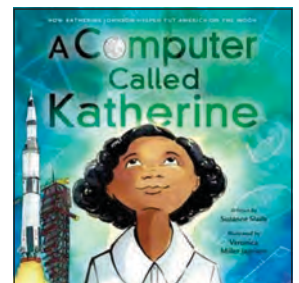
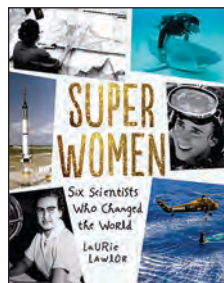
On a piece of paper, in the left margin, write the words bolded below. Skip a few lines between words so you can write notes in these categories.

- ☐ **When** and **where** was Rachel born?
- ☐ What were her **parents** like? What was her **childhood home** like?
- ☐ What effects did the **Great Depression** have on her?
- ☐ What effects did **World War II** have on her?
- ☐ What were her **hobbies**?
- ☐ What made her become aware of **pollution and pesticides** and their effects?
- ☐ Did certain people or events **help her career**?
- ☐ What **jobs** did she have and how did they influence her career?
- ☐ How many **books** did she write?
- ☐ Did she win **awards**? Which ones?



Biologist Rachel Louis Carson. Wikimedia Commons, photographer unknown. Source: Smithsonian Institution.

Add to your knowledge



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Word Search

Can you find these sixteen words? What is the significance of each word in Rachel Carson's life? Words can go in any direction. Words can share letters as they cross over each other.

M Z K V Y J Z I I R T K F T U B W I
A Z C R I B H S S Y C B Y R F I S P
R S I N S E C T I C I D E I E O A H
Y W L N I Q W Z A D I V S R G L E I
L O R A T N K L N H L H E R L O S V
A N A I C N K Q D W E V E C Q G S Q
N I V V T I H I T R E O D A L Y T Q
D T S F M E M T I S Q M E T Z T J E
V T L E S T R E R K Z T O E E I F M
E K P K T D S E H U H X G E B I U Q
Q D A J X D P Z U C F C D K L X F C
C H A L L E N G E S D F H F C H P H
G E O I D A R K S B R Z O A T H R U
U D N X Y Q A D K A Q B N E T W Q N
G I I I R G X K C T E F A Q I H U B
T V U T A O R H T W O L L E Y T A O
J M R T E M E O E E Z W L T L L U M
E P N R X L O U E I K F D U H X P H

BIOLOGY
CHEMICALS
INSECTICIDE
PERSEVERE
SEA
YELLOWTHROAT
CHALLENGES
DDT
MAINE
RACHEL
WEB OF LIFE
CHATHAM
FISHERIES
MARYLAND
RADIO
WRITER

Use technology—a search engine—to find:

- ☐ Can you find an actual article that is mentioned in the Source Notes on page 32? Once you've found the article, can you connect information in the book to information in the article?
- ☐ Determine where Rachel Carson's notes and papers are stored now for use by researchers.
- ☐ What places or organizations are named in Rachel Carson's honor?



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Find these birds in the book

Can you find all these birds on the pages of the book? Rachel started her love of nature by watching birds. The title of her most famous book, *Silent Spring*, refers to the lack of bird songs if many birds die of the chemical DDT and other pollution. Do any of these birds live in your neighborhood? Conduct research in books, magazines, or the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website (<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/>) to find out more about these birds: What habitat do they need? What do they eat? Do they migrate? Why they are important in the environment?



Hermit thrush
© Ivan Kokoulin. Dreamstime.com



Eastern bluebirds
© Steve Byland. Dreamstime.com



Double-crested cormorants
© Brian Guest. Dreamstime.com



Atlantic puffins
© Antonio Guillen. Dreamstime.com



Common yellowthroat
© Mark Turner. Dreamstime.com



Yellow-legged gulls
© Maksym Gorpenyuk. Dreamstime.com



Northern cardinal
© Lee Ann Landstrom



American robin
© Lee Ann Landstrom

Discussion questions

- ☐ What unusual activities did Rachel do in her jobs? Would you want to do any of those? Why?
- ☐ What personality characteristics did Rachel have? Did these change during her life?
- ☐ What challenges did Rachel face throughout her life?
- ☐ What is bravery? Did Rachel show bravery and courage as she followed her goals? What are some examples of her courage? Have you done something brave?
- ☐ What were some results from *Silent Spring*? What did she do that made a difference? What can one person do to make a difference for the environment? What have you done? What else can you and your family do to make a difference?



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Be active

Check out these organizations to find out what you can do to help animals and the environment:

- ❑ The Cornell Lab of Ornithology: <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/get-involved/10-ways-to-help-birds/>
- ❑ National Audubon Society: <https://www.audubon.org> and <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/bird-friendly-communities> and <https://www.audubon.org/get-outside/activities>
- ❑ Sierra Club: <https://www.sierraclub.org/explore-issues>
- ❑ Earth Day: <https://www.earthday.org/education-resource-library>
- ❑ National Wildlife Federation: https://www.nwf.org/Kids-and_family/Connecting-Kids-and-Nature and <https://www.nwf.org/Garden-for-Wildlife>
- ❑ Xerces Society: <https://xerces.org/education>
- ❑ Ocean Conservancy: <https://oceanconservancy.org/action-center/>



About the author

Laurie Lawlor is the author of more than 40 works of award-winning fiction and nonfiction for children and young adults. Lawlor's books have appeared on many ALA and NCSS notable lists. Among these, her picture book biography *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World* won a Green Earth Book Award Honor and a John Burroughs Association Riverby Award. Lawlor lives in Evanston, Illinois. She has a degree in journalism and has taught writing at several universities and given many elementary school workshops throughout the Midwest. She is committed to environmental activism. Visit laurielawlor.com.



About the illustrator

Laura Beingessner has loved to draw and paint ever since she was a little girl. She is the illustrator of several books for children including *Rachel Carson and Her Book That Changed the World* by Laurie Lawlor and *Our Corner Grocery Store* by Joanne Schwartz. She lives in Toronto with her husband and son.



Curriculum Standards Met: The activities and discussion questions in this guide support the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects including: Reading Literature: RL.3-5.1,2,3,5. RL.6.1,2,3,4,5,6; Reading Informational Text: RI.4-5.1,2,3,4,5,9. RI.6.1,2,3,4,5,7,9; Writing: W.4-5.2,4,7,9. W.6.1,2,7,8,9; Speaking and Listening: SL.4-5.1,4. SL.6.1,4; Language: L.4-5.2,4,6. L.6.3,4,6; Literacy in History/Social Studies: 6.2,4,5,9; Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects: 6.2,6,7.

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